

SICC MEETING MINUTES

TRUMAN BUILDING, ROOM 850

MARCH 2, 2007

Members Present

Doris Hallford
Elizabeth Spaugh
Carissa Mattern
Lisa Robbins
Valeri Lane

Leslie Elpers
Stacey Owsley
Kathy Fuger
Joyce Jackman
Lois Sandbothe

Melinda Sanders
Debra Fiasco
Senator Scott T. Rupp
Linda Bohrer

Members Not Present

Kim Oligschlaeger

Wendy Witcig

Margaret Franklin

DESE Staff Present

Dale Carlson
Bill Connelly

Margaret Strecker
Mary Corey

CJ Hubbard
Judy Goans

To review copies of handouts referenced in the minutes below, go to the following website: <http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/SICCpage.html> and click on "Handouts" for the March 2, 2007 meeting.

Call to Order, Welcome and Introductions – Lisa Robbins called the meeting to order at 8:45. Introductions were made.

Approval of SICC Minutes - Lisa asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the November meeting, with corrections. Leslie Elpers made a motion and Stacey Owsley seconded the motion. Motion passed, with Melinda Sanders abstaining. Lisa asked for a motion to accept the minutes from the January meeting, with corrections. Leslie Elpers made a motion to accept and Val Lane seconded the motion. Motion passed.

DESE Updates

Compliance Update – Margaret Strecker discussed monitoring and general supervision with the council members. Margaret announced that CJ Hubbard has been named assistant director for the First Steps Part C program and Pam Schroeder, supervisor, is also working with the Part C program.

Public Reporting by SPOE Region – Mary Cory presented the draft of the public report required by IDEA, in conjunction with the SPP/APR report. The information is reported individually for each SPOE region. Mary addressed each indicator and answered questions regarding the data.

She reported that DESE is working with the University of Missouri (OSED) to evaluate the reliability of the current family survey. They reported that the consistency of responses received over the last 3 years indicates the data should be considered reliable. OSED suggested rewording some of the questions in the survey in order to provide for more accurate responses related to intent of the question.

Budget Report – Dale Carlson reported budget information through January 2007. The “A” report shows that the cost of services dropped significantly in January. Medicaid direct services and private insurance billing are coming in under budget due to delays in billing. This revenue will be recouped as the CFO continues to process claims. The insurance revenue and family cost participation payments are beginning to show in the system. These amounts are running somewhat behind projections since insurance billing for direct services continues to have processing problems. Carriers that elected to pay a bulk payment have paid to date about 1 million dollars for the calendar year. The Medicaid dollars are off due to new processing requirements associated with HIPAA implementation. We have not been able to submit claims to Medicaid since January 1, but those issues are expected to be resolved soon and the CFO will begin billing at that time. We will probably end up being below budget estimations for this fiscal year.

The “B” report displays direct expenditures by SPOE and shows the reduction in DS costs indicated above. Average monthly expenditures for direct services through January are \$1,214,961.54. Overall, total direct services expenditures to date are down by approximately \$1.2 million dollars compared to the same period last year. Child count for the month of January is also down compared to a year ago (3012 compared to 3751). The First Steps FY 2007 budget is still well on track.

DESE Update - Joyce reported that the governor’s office is working on appointments to the SICC and expects appointments to be finished soon. Currently we have 2 parent appointments and one provider appointment waiting finalization. DESE has also submitted change requests for some state agency representation.

Phillips and Associates, from St. Louis has a contract with the Division to determine an appropriate child count percentage for Missouri based on our eligibility criteria. We expect to have a final report around the end of April. Using data provided by the Division and other state agencies, the contractor will develop a methodology for determining a target child count based on the current 50% developmental delay criteria, as well as projections for adjusting the child count based on different levels of developmental delay. This study was needed to improve planning, forecasting, and serving children in the future.

As of February 1, providers were to begin tracking their mileage while providing First Steps services in natural environments. The Central Finance Office is working to create a reimbursement system so that providers can claim these miles as a travel reimbursement. The process will include a spot check each month of a percentage of providers for back up documentation related to the claim submitted for payment. Some providers are already set up to claim these miles on their taxes as a business expense and are choosing not to participate in the new First Steps reimbursement. DESE will review this new reimbursement carefully with the SPOE directors to determine whether it is helping with the provider shortages. DESE has also decided to leave in place for the rest of the fiscal year the \$45 reimbursement that the provider receives for traveling over 60 miles as a way to pay for some of the work time lost during travel.

Joyce shared RICC and SPOE reporting forms with the council and asked if the members had any comments or suggestions regarding the 2 reports. It was suggested that a section for “other” be added to each report and that “provider recruitment” be changed to “provider issues”. The changes will be made. If an RICC or SPOE chooses to report to the council, they are requested to provide a copy of their report to Judy Goans so that she can include the information in the minutes.

The First Steps audit is posted on the State Auditor’s website. The audit included a finding that Missouri’s eligibility criteria were very restrictive compared to other states, stating that perhaps fewer children would need early childhood special education if they received services earlier through First Steps. The audit acknowledged that some of the problems that the program faced early on have been corrected and changes have proven more effective. The audit also stated that using a multi-disciplinary team approach would result in a more efficient operation. The provider shortage in many areas of the state was documented as an ongoing concern. Inadequate pay rates were identified as an issue probably affecting provider availability and ultimately the number of children receiving services. The issues that prompted the audit do not exist in the program today. The auditor’s office also suggested that it might be more cost effective to employ the consultants rather than contracting for this service. Total funding for the First Steps program is unknown due to the fact that the Department of Mental Health does not track their expenditures for the program. The Department of Mental Health estimated that they incurred approximately \$1 million in expenditures for the program in fiscal year 2006. DESE responded to the audit and indicated that they concurred with many of the findings. DESE indicated that they needed to consider the availability of FTE before agreeing to hire additional staff but that they would work on addressing the auditor’s findings.

A Stakeholder meeting will be held on April 25 to address provider issues within the state. NECTAC is sending 2 staff members to facilitate the group discussion and to provide resources for the group’s consideration. After the meeting on April 25, DESE expects to bring some smaller workgroups together regionally to address issues unique to each region. A provider agency that withdrew from the First Steps program has been invited to the meeting so that their perspective of the program’s issues will also be addressed. The group includes large provider agencies from metropolitan and rural areas, single discipline/small agencies, independent providers, SICC membership, SPOE directors, RICC co-chairs, and parents. The group’s size is limited to 25 individuals for this first round of discussion. We hope to identify what the key issues are in order to move forward in a relatively short frame of time. Joyce will publicize the list of people who will be in this group on the First Steps web page.

SPOE Operations

- ◆ Debbie Brewer from Region 9 reported that their region is treading into best practice. She said that they have learned how to do it and now they will try to do it better.
- ◆ Niki Clover from Region 6 reported that they are excited to be fully staffed and are trying to get the new folks up to speed.
- ◆ Sarah Parker, formerly with Region 5 and now with Region 7, said the Kansas City region has also had a large turnover rate, but they have now been fully staffed for 2 weeks. Their region is also working towards best practice. Sarah attended the Robin McWilliam training, and she felt that it was very entertaining and that the information was great.
- ◆ Diana Patten from SPOE 8 reported that their region has been very busy. They also attended the Robin McWilliam training and she felt that the training was a positive

experience. Her most important issue is concentrating on child find activities. Their SPOE office has a very good working relationship with DMH.

- ◆ Kathy Daulton with SPOE 4 said they are working and focusing on quality and having a stable staff. They will begin to implement the techniques that they gathered at the Robin McWilliam training.

Legislative Update – Senator Scott Rupp updated the group on several bills that he is proposing in the Senate. Senate Bill (SB) 112 would remedy the sunset provision passed in error with SB 500 in 2005. SB 374 allows for a tax on health maintenance organizations that issue high deductible health plans combined with health savings accounts at a rate of 2 percent for the purpose of funding the First Steps program. SB 436 would implement 2 pilot programs. The first program would require either the Southwest SPOE or the Central SPOE to hire by January 1, 2008, one or more providers of early intervention services under the First Steps program. By December 31, 2007 the contract for the SPOE would be altered for the purpose of allowing the SPOE to either contract with SB 40 Boards for providers of early intervention services or to directly hire providers of early intervention services. Such providers shall only service those areas identified by the SPOE as being underserved due to lack of providers. By September 1, 2009 the SPOE shall conduct a study of the effect of hiring the providers under this act and submit the study to the Department, the State Interagency Coordinating Council and the General Assembly. The second pilot program for the Department to implement would allow the Regional Interagency Coordinating Council (RICC) of the Greater St. Louis SPOE to hire a child-find coordinator to conduct the child-find requirements of the First Steps program. The child-find coordinator shall be hired, selected, and employed by the RICC of the Greater St. Louis SPOE by January 1, 2008. By September 1, 2009 the Greater St. Louis SPOE shall conduct a study on the effect of hiring the child-find coordinator and submit the study to the Department, the State Interagency Coordinating Council and the General Assembly.

SB 617 prohibits the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education from promulgating rules as to certain services under Part B of the IDEA, and SB 131 renders the Missouri sunset provision not applicable to the early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities (First Steps program). The bill would extend the sunset for the First Steps program for 12 years. The SICC would like to continue the discussion at the May SICC meeting regarding the bills introduced by Senator Rupp.

RICC Regular Update

- ◆ Lisa Porter is the chair of the Region 3 RICC. Their region is attempting to finish filling their RICC board. The members of the board meet quarterly in Hannibal. The board agreed to have 2 committees, 1 for the east and 1 for the west, to address child find and provider recruitment. To address the barrier of provider enrollment, the SPOE has developed POS contracts with independent providers. Four contracts have been finalized with independent providers, and three are pending. The committee and the SPOE have also approached local ECSE Directors requesting space in the ECSE classroom/school setting to be used for First Steps visits. This would help address the problem of lost travel time.
- ◆ Region 2 RICC is attempting to finish filling their board by May of 2007. Their Child Find Committee has been very active in various public events. Their Advocacy/Legislation Committee planned and presented a First Steps Legislative Breakfast titled “A Progress Report on First Steps” which was held on February 23, 2007. The event was well attended and very successful. The Collaboration across Communities Committee met on January 19, and they have been focusing on the peer review process.

- ◆ Region 4 RICC is still continuing to fill their membership on their council. The RICC is focusing on the northern most counties of Region 4 to try to increase the presence of First Steps in these areas. The RICC members believe that the increase in mileage will aid in the provider recruitment problem.

Linda Borher, Missouri Department of Insurance, presented a report to the group relating to Senate Bill 500 and First Steps. This bill requires licensed insurers and health maintenance organizations (HMOs) to include coverage in their benefit packages for the services provided under the First Steps program. It is very difficult to determine which insurance companies are obligated to make payments to First Steps. The Department of Insurance will continue to work with DESE in identifying these companies. The CFO is working to determine the 5 most popular insurance companies in Missouri. Once they have identified these companies, they will provide a form to the SPOE offices that explains where to find the information that they need on the insurance cards.

Member Issues – There were no member issues to report.

Old Business – Joyce presented a copy of the new First Steps Annual Report to the SICC members and discussed its contents.

Leslie made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Joyce seconded the motion. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.